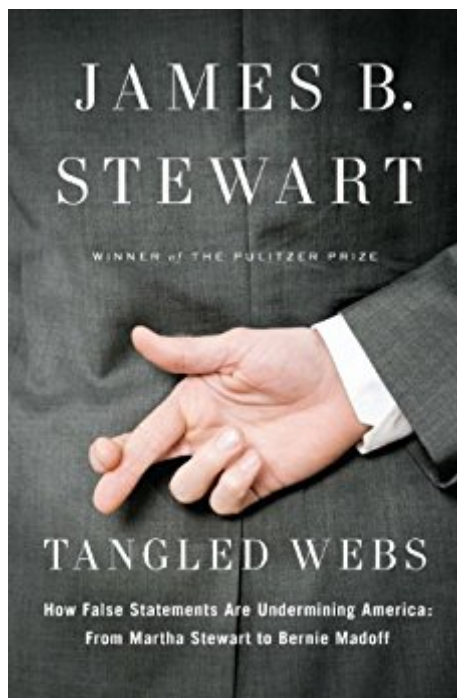


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Tangled Webs: How False Statements Are Undermining America: From Martha Stewart To Bernie Madoff



Synopsis

Bestselling author James B. Stewart's newsbreaking investigation of our era's most high-profile perjurers, revealing the alarming extent of this national epidemic. Our system of justice rests on a simple proposition: that witnesses will raise their hands and tell the truth. In *Tangled Webs*, James B. Stewart reveals in vivid detail the consequences of the perjury epidemic that has swept our country, undermining the very foundation of our courts. With many prosecutors, investigators, and participants speaking for the first time, *Tangled Webs* goes behind the scene of the trials of media and homemaking entrepreneur Martha Stewart; top White House political adviser Lewis "Scooter" Libby; home-run king Barry Bonds; and Wall Street money manager Bernard Madoff. The saga of Martha Stewart's conviction captured the nation, but until now no one has answered the most basic question: Why would Stewart risk prison, put her entire empire in jeopardy, and lie repeatedly to government investigators to save a few hundred thousand dollars in stock gains? Moreover, how exactly was the notoriously meticulous Stewart brought down? Drawing on the accounts of then-deputy attorney general James Comey and U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald, Stewart sheds new light on the Libby investigation, making clear how far into the White House the Valerie Plame CIA scandal extended, and why Libby took the fall. In San Francisco, Giants home-run king Barry Bonds faces trial due to his testimony before a grand jury investigating the use of illegal steroids in sports. Bonds was warned explicitly that the only crime he faced was perjury. Stewart unlocks the story behind the mounting evidence that he nonetheless lied under oath. Bernie Madoff's Ponzi scheme is infamous, but less well known is how he eluded detection for so long in the face of repeated investigations. Of the four he is the only one who has admitted to lying. The perjury outbreak is symptomatic of a broader breakdown of ethics in American life. It isn't just the judicial system that relies on an honor code: Academia, business, medicine, and government all depend on it. *Tangled Webs* explores the age-old tensions between greed and justice, self-interest and public interest, loyalty and duty. At a time when Americans seem hungry for moral leadership and clarity, *Tangled Webs* reaffirms the importance of truth.

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Customer Reviews

Lying seems epidemic in American society. Stewart focuses his superb writing skills on the general problem of perjury and lying under oath by highlighting the cases of four celebrated liars: Martha Stewart (no apparent relation to the author), Scooter Libby, Barry Bonds, and Bernie Madoff. For each of these, he asks the same question: "Why would people with so much to lose put so much at risk by lying under oath?" Ultimately, the answer becomes obvious: "They thought they could get away with it." Stewart uses extensive sources for his own narration. Chief among these are notes from investigations, court proceedings, and personal interviews. Although the book is non-fiction, it's a page-turner, because the machinations of the perpetrators and their victims are suspenseful, ensnaring, and powerfully emotional. Each of the perpetrators would ultimately explain their deceptions as motivated by "loyalty," but this seems mostly self-serving and devious. Whatever loyalty they had in mind was to themselves, as all were readily prepared to let underlings and associates take hard falls to cushion their own. In the end, most of the celebrity liars recovered reasonably, with the exception of Madoff who will be in prison for a long time and has lost the love of his family and seen one of his sons commit suicide pursuant to the shame he showered on them. These continuing losses of Madoff as well as those of Bonds, recently convicted of obstruction of justice, aren't covered in the book which was written in 2010 although published in 2011. This book has several strengths, and perhaps just one weakness. The strengths are the readable and interesting writing, about larger-than-life "heroes" turned "villains."

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